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Navy and Marine Corps Medical News
MN-00-36
September 8, 2000

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BUMED distributes MEDNEWS to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further distribution is highly encouraged.

Stories in MEDNEWS use these abbreviations after a Navy medical professional's name to show affiliation: MC - Medical Corps (physician); DC - Dental Corps; NC - Nurse Corps; MSC - Medical Service Corps (clinicians, researchers and administrative managers). Hospital Corpsmen (HM) and Dental Technician (DT) designators are placed in front of their names.

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Stories:

Headline: Suicide prevention training

Suicide is the second leading cause of death of Sailors and Marines. In an effort to combat this killer within our ranks, the Navy and Marine Corps have teamed up to produce a video training package called "Suicide Prevention: Taking Action - Saving Lives."

The package contains an 18-minute video, facilitator's manual, overhead transparencies, and has been designed to help standardize training throughout the fleet. It is for use by Navy leaders, in conjunction with chaplains, family service centers, health promotion coordinators, and medical treatment facilities, to meet suicide awareness and prevention training requirements. Preliminary research indicates that this training is best conducted with groups of 15 to 25 people to promote discussion and deal with practical questions.

The training package was produced in consultation with

nationally recognized subject matter experts from the American Association of Suicidology. The video uses a variety of scenarios to illustrate practical ways to intervene with people who are at risk. The intent of the training is not to teach sailors to be counselors, but to show how to seek help for shipmates in need by working with the chain of command and local assistance resources.

Copies are available for Navy and Marine Corps commands at the defense visual information website at dodimagery.afis.osd.mil. Orders may be placed through the site's davis/ditis search option found on the left-side toolbar - then choosing the pin/icn search option and entering pin number 806377.

To support local computer-aided presentations, facilitators can download copies of the manual and transparencies via NAVPERSCOM (PERS-601) website at www.persnet.navy.mil/pers601/index.html or from the health promotion section of navy environmental health center website at www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/suicide/pres/index.htm.

Videotape endorsement of this training by Navy and Marine Corps senior leadership can be found on lifelines quality of life (QOL) broadcast network at www.lifelines2000.org.

The point of contact is Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Kennedy, NAVPERSCOM (PERS-601B), at (901) 874-4256/dsn 882, or (e-mail) p601b@persnet.navy.mil.

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Headline: New SMO comes aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN
From the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Cmdr. Louis Valbracht took over the reins as the new senior medical officer (SMO) aboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN and is looking forward to practicing some real medicine.

"This is the ultimate for me," Valbracht said. "The Navy has presented me with the opportunity to practice medicine the way I want to practice."

As the senior physician for the battle group, Valbracht is tasked with every thing from health promotion to overseeing surgery. A 19-year Navy veteran, with four years as a Hospital Corpsman Second Class, he spent seven years in a private practice prior to joining the Medical Corps in 1985.

While in the private sector, Valbracht took a holistic approach to medicine, which means looking at the patient as a whole person rather than concentrating on the individual ailment. "I made house calls," the country doctor said with a smile. "I took care of people from birth to death." Valbracht described himself as one of the last doctors of the 'Golden Age of Medicine' before HMO-style medicine took over.

As the new SMO he has taken notice of the professionalism of not only his department but the rest of the ship as well. "This is one of the smoothest run ships I've been on as well as the cleanest," he said. "And I couldn't ask for any more out of a staff."

During his stay aboard, Valbracht has three goals in mind - increasing birth month recall numbers, reorganizing Lincoln's walking blood bank, and starting a health promotion program.

"Right now, just being the SMO is a full time job," he said. "But as things smooth out, I'll have more of an opportunity to concentrate on crew issues."

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Headline: DoD attacks ecstasy drug use

By Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - What drug comes in tablets, makes "painful" realities go away and is popular among hedonistic young people today -- including some service members?

The answer is an illegal "designer" drug called Ecstasy, also known as "Adam," "XTC," "Clarity" and "Essence," among other street names. Its use by service members increased markedly in fiscal 1999, and that's a concern to the Department of Defense," said Army Col. Mick Smith, science and testing officer of DoD's Office of the Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support.

DoD has tracked Ecstasy and service members' use since the early 1990s. "Our primary concern was that this was a popular drug in Europe, and we had service members stationed there," Smith said. DoD mandated servicewide random testing for Ecstasy in 1997. "Ecstasy use is still not as prevalent as use of marijuana or cocaine."

Ecstasy is the common name for 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, a synthetic, psychoactive drug. It has no medical value and cannot be prescribed legally, Smith said. The drug is mostly manufactured in secret labs in the Netherlands and Belgium, with worldwide distribution arranged by organized crime. Most people who use Ecstasy range in age from 14 to 25, with 18 being the most common age, he said.

When ingested, Ecstasy is quickly absorbed into the user's bloodstream, Smith said. It goes to the brain and causes a massive release of a natural chemical called serotonin.

"Serotonin is a chemical that makes us feel good, so the Ecstasy user feels euphoria and a heightening of his or her senses," he said. "The user will also experience increased heart rate, increased energy level and may hallucinate." One "hit" of Ecstasy, which can cost up to \$30, may last four to six hours, he added.

However, Ecstasy has a dark downside not readily apparent to the "invincible" young people who use it.

"Recent scientific evidence has shown that even small amounts of Ecstasy damage the nerve cells that produce serotonin and cause permanent brain damage," Smith said. "Users become depressed and suffer from memory loss. Some chronic users become permanently depressed."

Smith notes that Ecstasy has been popular since the late 1980s among young people overseas, particularly in Europe. The drug has become a signature of youthful crowds that dance all

night in packed, overheated clubs called "raves." The drug has crossed the Atlantic in force: U.S. hospitals participating in the Drug Abuse Warning Network reported that Ecstasy-related emergency room incidents increased nationwide from 250 in 1994, to 637 in 1997, to 1,142 in 1998.

Ecstasy abuse can be dangerous. "Users taking too much Ecstasy may become dehydrated, have elevated temperature, have a drop in blood pressure, have a seizure, and die," Smith said. "There have been numerous reports of young people dying after Ecstasy use."

Each 300 milligram Ecstasy tablet contains about 75 to 150 milligrams of the drug, often mixed with other chemicals, Smith said. The tablets may be branded with logos such as butterflies, lightning bolts, zodiac signs, stars and clovers.

The president's Office of National Drug Control Policy reports that most Ecstasy comes from Europe, but noted recently that the Drug Enforcement Administration seized five clandestine Ecstasy labs in the United States in early 1999.

The U.S. military takes service members' drug abuse seriously. It uses education and deterrence -- most notably in the form of random urinalyses testing -- to reduce drug demand within its ranks, Smith said. These efforts continue to be successful, he said, pointing to the relatively low number of service members who are testing positive for illegal drug use.

DoD conducted 2,273,998 urinalyses in fiscal 1999, according to Smith. Marijuana positives were 12,006, cocaine positives were 2,839, methamphetamine positives were 807, Ecstasy positives were 432, and lysergic acid diethylamide -- LSD -- positives were 325.

Additionally, the Defense Department has worked for three years to develop a better drug test, Smith said.

"Next year, DoD will implement a better screening process in its random drug testing program that will be more sensitive and identify more Ecstasy users," he said. "DoD has also been working with law enforcement officials to track and identify sources of supply and regions where Ecstasy use is most prevalent. The largest recent increase in use has been in the Northeast."

Using Ecstasy violates Article 112-A of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Smith said. The article outlaws the knowing use of any illegal drug in the military. Drug users are subject to punitive discharges, prison or both.

"Many drug users believe that they will not get caught, but when they do get caught in a random drug test, the consequences are harsh," he concluded.

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Headline: TRICARE question and answer

Question: How will TRICARE Senior Prime work?

Answer: TRICARE Senior Prime, DoD's Medicare Subvention program, will operate similar to a Medicare at-risk health maintenance organization (HMO), with the goal of becoming a fully participating Medicare HMO in the future. All care must be obtained either by or through your Primary Care Manager at the

MTF.

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Headline: Anthrax question and answer

Question: Has the anthrax vaccine been linked to illnesses among Persian Gulf War veterans?

Answer: No. Several independent nationally renowned scientific groups have addressed this issue and have found no evidence to link anthrax vaccine with illnesses among Gulf War veterans. Symptoms have been reported both by Gulf War veterans who were vaccinated and those who were not. The Institute of Medicine, the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, National Institute of Health, and the Defense Science Board have reviewed the correlation and concluded that the anthrax vaccine does not explain the reported chronic effects associated with illnesses among Gulf War veterans.

There have been several unsubstantiated allegations in the media and elsewhere about experimental vaccines that may have contained non-FDA-licensed substances. Only the FDA-licensed anthrax vaccine was used then or now.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Vegetables Provide Powerful Medicine From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

What food group can reduce your risk of cancer by 30 percent, protect against heart disease and colds, have antibacterial capabilities, and are low in calories and high in fiber? These superstar foods are vegetables!

Check out the super powers of these vegetables.

Spinach, made popular by the cartoon character Popeye, is one of the many leafy green vegetables that have super powers. It is a healthy source of iron and beta carotene. Beta carotene acts as a disabler of a potential number of cancer causing substances, and is a rich source of vitamin K, which is essential for blood clotting. It also contains vitamin D, magnesium, boron and calcium, all of which are essential for building strong bones.

Broccoli is another powerful leafy green superstar. In addition to being an excellent source of beta carotene, broccoli is a great source of vitamin C, calcium and fiber.

The potato achieves superstar status when it is unadorned. A modest potato has zero fat, lots of fiber, complex carbohydrates and vitamin C. And be sure to eat the skin, as most of the potato's nutrients are found there.

Aside from their powerful aroma, onions and garlic, are considered powerful vegetables. Onions contain organosulfides, which are the substances that give them their taste and smell. Researchers at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX, suggest that organosulfides appear to prevent the body from turning chemicals in the liver into toxic substances.

Garlic is one of the heart's favorite vegetables because of its properties that improve blood clotting and circulation. It lowers blood pressure in people that suffer from hypertension.

Garlic also has qualities to defend the body against colds and flu.

According to Registered Dietitian LT Kristen Moe, MSC, at Naval Hospital Charleston, SC, "Vegetables slow down or reverse many of the steps that result in cancer. It is important to note that research is leaning toward the benefits of eating whole fruits and vegetables rather than taking vitamin and mineral supplements."

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Comments about and ideas for MEDNEWS are welcome. Story submissions are highly encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, at email: mednews@us.med.navy.mil; telephone 202-762-3218, (DSN) 762, or fax 202-762-3224.

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